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**Mini mall eyed for Attaway-287**

By BRIAN AHNMARK, Coolidge Editor November 02, 2006

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**Deluxe Circle K store planned on site of Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge**

While the future of the intersection of Attaway Road and Arizona 287 remains in the works - including plans for a stoplight and potential retail centers at the critical junction bisecting Coolidge and Florence - one proposal appears well on its way to reality: The Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge will be replaced by a new Circle K, and the Elks Lodge will be relocated across Attaway Road.

Circle K's application for a liquor license came before the Coolidge City Council on Monday, Oct. 23. Police Chief Jim Palmer indicated that there was no evidence to suggest that the application should be denied, but Councilwoman Bonnie Palmer asked if it was customary for a business to apply for a liquor license before its actual physical facility is constructed. City Attorney Denis Fitzgibbons explained that Circle K typically conducts business in this manner.

"They want to see if they can get the license in the first place, before putting money down to purchase the land and set up the store," he said.

Alton Bruce, city economic development director, noted that the design of the future Circle K was "not typical." For starters, the company has negotiated to purchase six acres of land from the Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge. The Circle K store is expected to be between 4,500 and 5,000 square feet, twice the size of a standard Circle K. The store will include a walk-in beer cooler, "so they will definitely want to know if they can get a liquor license," Bruce said.

The Circle K will likely be surrounded by other retail shops in a mini-mall design. Bruce said company representatives were eager to "work closely with the city in terms of what we want to see with the design guidelines, and customize it for our purpose if that's what we want."

"This is an opportunity to establish a design theme at an important future intersection," Councilman Gilbert Lopez said.

Bruce said Circle K hopes to break ground on the site shortly after Jan. 1, at some point in the first quarter of 2007.

In the meantime, the Elks Lodge is working with Pinal County representatives to get septic permits, which will enable the civic organization to relocate just across Attaway Road. At the mention of septic services, Vice Mayor Jon Thompson asked Bruce if it was appropriate for the Circle K to operate on septic rather than sewers.

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"I'd love to have sewer service out there, but it's going to take more than a Circle K to justify burying the line," Bruce said, confirming that the city would be able to proceed with plans to use septic services.

Thompson expressed further concern about the influx of traffic at the intersection as the future facilities are built. Palmer referred to a pending project with the Arizona Department of Transportation, which is working with the city to widen the intersection and add a traffic signal.

Arizona 287 widens from two to four lanes as it approaches Attaway Road from the east and west, meaning drivers frequently accelerate in an attempt to pass slower vehicles. Left-turn lanes from the highway to Attaway hamper visibility. Drivers northbound on Attaway must cross multiple lanes of traffic to turn westbound onto Arizona 287, or to continue north. New housing projects, as well as nearby gravel pits, also create high commercial vehicle traffic.

According to documentation provided by the Coolidge Police Department, there have been at least 25 reported accidents at the intersection in the past three years. Eleven involved injuries, and two resulted in fatalities.

In March, Coolidge City Manager Bob Flatley called ADOT representatives and learned that a traffic signal had been approved for the intersection.

Since then, however, the project has been slowed by delays. An intergovernmental agreement between the city and the state of Arizona (representing ADOT) was approved July 10 by the Coolidge City Council. The agreement reflected that ADOT would cover \$175,000 of the cost for the signal, while the city would tackle \$75,000 of the cost.

Lee Engineering, the company responsible for the two most recent traffic signals in Coolidge (one at Vah-ki Inn Road and Arizona Boulevard, the other at the Arizona 87/287 intersection), was tapped for a preliminary design. Progress hit a snag resulting from unique conditions at the intersection, such as uneven elevations and existing electrical boxes.

And any design will be forced to change over time, explained Don Peters, Public Works director.

"Right now, the traffic signal is being designed in accordance with what is there," Peters said. The current 66-foot right-of-way could widen to anywhere between 110 to 150 feet within 10 years as the intersection develops. That means altering setbacks, relocating sidewalks, signal poles, electrical poles, and so on.

Peters said the timeline for the construction of the traffic signal has yet to be determined, as the city is "still arguing with ADOT" over specifics. Peters estimated that it could take two more months of planning and three to six months of construction to bring the signal into service.

Bruce also noted that Circle K representatives have been in contact with ADOT to set up access control at the construction site in order to minimize traffic hazards.

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